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LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/23/2028
TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [ER](#)
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH ERITREAN SOLDIERS IN ASSAB

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen for Reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (S/NF) RSO source relayed the following second-hand information provided by a member of the Eritrean National Security Agency. According to source, an unidentified group of Eritrean military colonels and one general went to Assab from 06/20-21/08 to meet with a group of approximately 200 Eritrean troops about the 6/10-12/2008 military engagements with Djiboutian troops. Source stated this meeting lasted over three hours and was designed to boost morale among Eritrean soldiers stationed in the border area and of those who fought in the skirmishes. NOTE: Source had no additional information where in Assab the meeting took place or which Eritrean military unit was present at this meeting. END NOTE. The assembled group of soldiers reportedly criticized the officers, and raised questions about why they were fighting with Djibouti, why the Eritrean military was beefing up forces in the Ras Doumeira area, and where the Eritrean military leadership had been when the fighting took place. The officers allegedly responded that Eritrea had not invaded Djibouti and Eritrean troops were only occupying land that belonged to Eritrea. At the end of the meeting, six of the most vocal questioners were detained by unknown security personnel and taken away from their unit. The following morning, ten Eritrean soldiers who attended the meeting deserted to Djibouti, NFI.

¶2. (S/NF) Source also stated President Isaias is not staying at his Asmara residence (located near the U.S. Embassy compound), but has started residing at the more secure Presidential Palace in downtown Asmara. Source felt this change was unusual and indicates Isaias' increasing fears about his personal security.
MCMULLEN